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**Statement of United States Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky
at the Conclusion of the APEC Ministerial Sessions in Auckland, New Zealand**

(Auckland, New Zealand, September 10, 1999)

“During the past two days, APEC Ministers conducted a thorough, thoughtful and intensive set of discussions on how APEC can make a contribution to the WTO. From the outset, there was strong shared desire among APEC Ministers to once again make a significant contribution to advancing the work of opening markets in the multilateral trading system. Our chief aim for this meeting was for APEC members to send a strong message of support for the WTO and the launch of a new Round at the Ministerial this November in Seattle. The strong statement we have issued underscores our conviction that continued progress in opening markets and expanding trade opportunities is the best means of securing prosperity and growth for the region, and for the world.

“The result today means that APEC economies -- accounting for nearly half of world trade -- are ready to aggressively pursue accelerated market access and launch a new Round with a focused agenda.

“In particular, our statement goes well beyond the one that APEC Ministers made in June when we endorsed a three-year negotiation, and called for non-agricultural tariffs to be included in the agenda, along with the already agreed areas of agriculture and services. It provides critical impetus to the launch of new WTO negotiations in Seattle. Specifically, our meeting has produced the following concrete results:

- Endorsement by all APEC members for the launching of a new WTO round of multilateral trade negotiations in Seattle;
- Agreement that the new Round should result in the abolition of agricultural export subsidies, and a pledge to participate constructively in upcoming agriculture negotiations;

- Agreement in Seattle to extend the current moratorium on customs duties on electronic commerce;
- Endorsement to achieve at Seattle an agreement on transparency in government procurement;
- With respect to the eight accelerated tariff liberalization (ATL) sectors, which APEC forwarded to the WTO last year for early agreement, we have agreed to continue to work, as we pledged last year, for agreement on these sectors in 1999, so that we may finalize the details and begin implementing a completed agreement next year. We have also agreed that implementation of ATL should be undertaken on a provisional basis, with final agreement part of the conclusion of the Round. This last point is meant to provide impetus to the ATL initiative by ensuring that it will enhance, rather than undercut, efforts to move the new Round to conclusion.
- We have made clear that the new Round must address the concerns of developing countries by providing timely market access, greater attention to capacity building and technical assistance.

“Each of these areas of agreement will provide real momentum to our efforts to open world trade in the WTO as we approach the Seattle Ministerial. Once again, APEC has proven its ability to be a leading force in the multilateral trading system. We look forward to working with our APEC and other WTO partners in a way that builds on this momentum, to produce an ambitious, forward-looking outcome in Seattle.

“In addition to our statement on the WTO, we have reached agreement in other areas critical to the advancement of our regional and global trade objectives. Specifically:

- We have agreed to strengthen and sharpen APEC’s own mechanisms for expanding trade, through reform of the Individual Action Plan and Collective Action plan process.
- In keeping with New Zealand’s theme of “strengthening the functioning of markets,” we have agreed on a range of activities to increase transparency and improve corporate governance. These actions go to the root of many of our trade problems in the region and will help maintain the momentum of economic reform in Asia.
- We have also affirmed our support for a transparent and science-based approach to the introduction and use of biotechnology products, and agreed to discuss this matter next year based on a report of experts on technical work now underway in APEC.”